THREE

DOUBTS

Propoſed to the Reverend

BISHOPS,

Which if Reſolved, All Diſſenters Readily Comply in all things with the Church of *England*.

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Three Doubts Propoſed to the Reverend Biſhops, &c.

A Diſcourſe intituled, *The Judgment and Doctrine of the Clergy of the Church of* England, *concerning one ſpecial Branch of the King's Prerogative*, viz. *in diſpenſing with the Penal Laws, aſſerted by the moſt Reverend Fathers in God the Lords Arch-Biſhops* Bancroft, Laud, *and* Uſher, &c. Licenſed the ſecond of *May*, 1687. And many Papers ſince, ſo plainly make it out, *that the diſpenſing with Penal Laws is involved in the formal Conception of* Sovereignty, that it were needleſs and endleſs to touch any more on that point untill thoſe Papers are anſwered. They further ſhew, that *it is clear in Divinity, that ſuch an Authority belongs to the King by the word of God in Scripture. That it is inſeparably annexed to the Sovereign, and is an eſſential and individual Right of Monarchy. That the Kings of* England *at all times uſed it, and that it is not in their Power to abdicate that Prerogative from themſelves, it being inſeparably annexed to their Sacred Perſons and Royal Power.* Even to the Aſterick, ſays my Author, there is a Marginal Note, *viz.* 44. *Eliz.* In the Houſe of Commons Sir *George Moor* ſaid; "*we know the Power of her* "*Majeſty cannot be reſtrained by any Act: Why there-*"*fore ſhould we thus talk?* Admit we ſhould make "the Statute with a *Non obſtante*, yet the Queen

Townſend's Collect. p. 234

"may grant a Patent with a *Non obſtante* to croſs "this *Non obſtante*. So that evidently it is not in the Power of Parliaments to reſtrain the King's diſpenſing with Penal Laws by *Non obſtante's* or any other means whatſoever; *Statute-Laws are made to eaſe him of his Labour, not to deprive him of his Power*, as my Lord *Hobart* well obſerves: which had our Biſhops likewiſe obſerved, or had they the leaſt deference to their Predeceſſors, men doubtleſs of as great Ability as themſelves; or had their Church been ſo Loyal as ſhe pretends to be, we had not ſeen *Majeſty* ſo rudely affronted as of late.

Colt and Glover againſt the Biſhop of Litchfield.

And what is it his Majeſty now aſſerts his Prerogative of diſpenſing with Penal Laws for, but to allay thoſe Miſchiefs, which by no other means can be remedied? *viz.* The continual Feuds, Caballings, Factions and Animoſities ariſing daily from different Opinions about Religion. The Church has been this Hundred Years endeavouring to reduce all into her Communion; but finds it a thing impoſſible to be done; and in thus endeavouring has ſo often chopt and changed, that ſhe has quite run her ſelf off from what ſhe was at firſt.

The King for theſe Reaſons thinks *Liberty of Conſcience* moſt expedient for the eaſe and advantage of his People, of which he is ſole Judge by the Law of God: *Liberty of Conſcience* is but the Natural Right of every man, and his Majeſty will have his Subjects enjoy it. He is the Ordinary of *England*, and the Biſhops, even on that ſcore, owe to him the ſame Obedience, their reſpective Flocks owe to them:

them: And will they be the first to disobey, and refuse, when commanded, to cause his Declaration to be read in Churches? If Kings have been remiss and not exerted their Power, or by Menace have sometimes foregone it; which only argues that when Princes are easy, Subjects will be Rebels, does this affect the Crown? —— But the Bishops have gained a great point by Non-suiting the King! —— How? by owning their own hand-writing in the Council-Chamber, and not owning it in open Court? Is this a Victory becoming their Function, and to be thus Riotously Huzza'd? The Bishops likewise bless the People now more then usually; but without the Sign of the Cross: which, according to *Baker*'s History, *p.* 445. is a sign that they are no Christian Bishops. And it is most certain, that no Christian Bishops did ever bless the People, nor any thing else without the Sign of the Cross: These Bishops do bless the People without the Sign of the Cross. *Ergo*.

And is not to bid them stand fast to their Religion (whilst they bless them) when that is in no-wise attackt, to bid them stand fast to their Bloudy Laws, and Rebel when those are assaulted? What else means these Soundings and Caballings and the Riots that follow them all over the Kingdom? But if we must be Huzza'd again to Church, let the Reverend Bishops as in Duty to God and their Church bound, first resolve us these three Doubts.

1. All the Bishops that have hitherto Preach'd at *White-Hall* on *Ash-Wednesday*, at leastwise as many as I can find of them, do declare *Lent* to be Apostolical, and fairly derive it from the Apostles; yet 5. *Eliz.* 5.

it

it is Enacted, that *Whosoever shall by Preaching, Teaching, Writing, or by open Speech notify, that any Eating of Fish, or forbearing of Flesh mentioned in the Statute, is of any necessity for the saving the Soul of Man, or that it is the Service of God, otherwise, than as other Politick Laws are, and be; that then such Persons shall be punished as spreaders of False News are, and ought to be,* i. e. Whipt. If our Reverend Prelates can shew us how *Lent* can be an Apostolical Institution, and that notwithstanding to observe it *as the Service of God*, ought to be a Whipping Matter; All Dissenters readily conform to the *Church of England*. If they cannot shew us this, their Church is a Fop, a Ridiculous Church. And what hopes can there be of their shewing this? They will not deny *Lent* to be an Apostolical Institution, and they dare not Gain say that Act of Parliament: For that Parliament made the Church, and 'tis from that Parliament, that we have had these tumultuous Huzza's of *Bishops* and of *Church by Law Established*.

2. Our Reverend Bishops have Altars in their Cathedralls, and no Sacrifice, Nonsense enough! But they have Candles also on these Altars never Lighted: We read, that Candles *on Candlesticks, that they may shine to all that are in the House*, are Emblems of Gods Church: Then are not Candles on Altars that never shine, Emblems of a Mock-Church? *contrariorum eadem est ratio.*

Matt. 5. 16.

3. Whether the Doctrine of the present Church be not, *That no Sober Enquirer can miss of what is necessary to Salvation*? And whether she binds any man to any further Belief? And since her Rule of Faith is,

Scripture

Scripture to be interpreted by every Man of ſound Judgment: Whether this it ſelf be not *Liberty of Conſcience?* unleſs they will allow men to be of one Belief Interiourly, and compel them to be of another Exteriourly, expreſly againſt St. *Paul* 10. to *Romans* 10.

I hope our Seven Starrs who of late have ſo Illuminated our Streets, or ſome who ſee by thoſe Lights, will do their Church ſo much Right as to reſolve us theſe few ſhort doubts, *and ſo we ſhall be one Fold and one Shepheard. John the* 10.16.

FINIS.